

## 1 Purpose

This policy is to outline the company policy relating to the grievances. This procedure shall apply to all employees and part-time staff.

Occasionally, employees experience problems or concerns with their work, working environment or working relationships, which they wish to raise and try to resolve. This grievance procedure aims to provide International Associates with a robust mechanism to deal with these issues quickly, consistently, and fairly.

It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of the types of concerns from which a grievance could arise, though the list below provides some of the more common reasons:

- Terms and conditions of employment.
- Health and safety.
- Relationships at work.
- New working practices.
- Organisational change.
- Equal opportunities.
- Working environment.

## 2 Definition

Forming part of the (QMS) Quality Management System and employment contracts, this policy applies to all employees within International Associates without exception.

Although local offices have varying legislation, International Associates seeks to apply best practices in all locations. International Associates shall follow the local legislation if in place; however, if local legislation does not give employees specific rights, this policy shall apply, giving rights to employees if a grievance is raised.

International Associates expects that grievances will be raised as soon as practically possible after the occurrence that led to the grievance, and without unreasonable delay (i.e., normally within 20 working days).

International Associates also has a Code of Conduct and additional policies that provide expected standards of behaviour and practical guidance for employees during day-to-day work activities.

Occasionally, an allegation may be malicious, and disciplinary action may be instigated in these circumstances.

## 3 Exclusions

Matters that are excluded from being dealt with under this procedure:

- Raising a grievance that was heard under this procedure within the preceding six months.
- Matters over which International Associates has no control, e.g., Health & Safety legislation
- Salary and grading applications.
- Grievances that are the subject of or appropriate to a collective dispute will be handled separately.
- If the employee raises a concern as a "protected disclosure" in compliance with the public interest disclosure provisions, "whistle-blowing".

- Allegations of bullying, discrimination, or harassment on the basis of sex, race or disability, age, membership or non-membership of a trade union, HIV status, sexual orientation, personal beliefs or pregnancy status. Any concerns in this area should be raised separately under the International Associates Discrimination Policy.
- If International Associates has reasonable grounds to believe that pursuing the grievance will expose a member of staff to a significant threat.

## **4 Procedure**

### **4.1 Informal Discussion**

If possible, in the first instance, the employee should try and resolve the concern or issue informally through their line manager. However, if this is not possible because the grievance is with the line manager, then the employee should approach the line manager's manager instead or a member of Human Resources. The manager approached will confidentially discuss your concerns, conduct discreet investigations, and attempt to resolve the matter. Dealing with grievances in this way can often lead to the quickest and most effective resolution. Both the manager and employee may find it helpful to keep a note of this discussion.

### **4.2 Formal Procedure: Stage 1 – Letting International Associates Know the Nature of the Grievance**

#### **4.2.1 The Grievance Statement**

Suppose the issue continues, or it is not appropriate to resolve informally. In that case, the employee should raise the concern through the formal grievance procedure by placing their grievance in writing without unreasonable delay. This written grievance should be given to the employee's immediate line manager, with a copy also provided to the HR Manager. This is designed to enable the employee to set out the nature of their grievance and to avoid any delays in the process; it is essential to provide full details of the grievance.

In the circumstances where the employee's complaint is against their immediate line manager, the employee should provide the written grievance to the manager of their line manager instead, and the process shall proceed directly to stage 2.

Should an employee require support in compiling the grievance statement, the employee may wish to seek support from a work colleague, Trade Union Representative, or other employee representative on a confidential basis.

If, due to disability or special circumstances, an employee is not able to place his/her grievance in writing on the Grievance form, he/she should raise this immediately with his/her manager or a member of the HR Team.

If the employee is a member of the Trade Union, he/she should contact their local representative at this stage if they have not already done so.

#### **4.2.2 The Grievance Meeting**

As soon as practically possible or within 5 working days of the manager receiving the written grievance, the employee will be invited to a grievance meeting.

The employee has the right to bring along a companion to this meeting and any further such meetings (see section 6 - Right to be accompanied below). This companion can be either a local trade union representative and/or a work colleague.

The employee and management involved will be able to present their case at the meeting. Both parties should also consider options for resolving the grievance.

The grievance Panel will consist of the employee's line manager (as appropriate) and a member of the HR Team not previously involved in any aspect of the issue raised.

#### **4.2.3 After the Grievance Meeting - Deciding on Appropriate Action**

Once the grievance meeting has been concluded and a decision reached, the employee will be notified in writing of this decision as soon as practically possible or within 15 working days from the date the meeting was held.

#### **4.3 Formal Procedure: Stage 2**

Suppose the employee does not feel that the grievance was resolved at stage 1. In that case, the employee should raise the matter with a more senior manager, usually a Departmental Manager or Regional Manager.

In the first instance, the employee should place the reasons why they do not believe their grievance has been resolved in writing, together with the original complaint, and pass to the Regional Manager or Service within 10 working days or as soon as practically possible after receiving the decision from Stage 1 of the process.

The Regional Manager / Service Director (or nominee) will investigate and arrange a grievance meeting to discuss the grievance as soon as practically possible or within 10 working days of receiving the written grievance.

Again, the employee and management involved will be able to present their case to a Grievance panel.

#### **4.4 After the Grievance Meeting**

The senior manager (or nominee) will write to the employee to respond to the grievance as soon as practically possible or within 10 working days of the second grievance meeting.

### **5 Final Right of Appeal**

Where an employee feels that a grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved, the employee may appeal against this decision. If the employee wishes to appeal, he or she must inform the Board of Directors in writing within a reasonable time; 10 working days is used as guidance, stating the reasons for the appeal and enclosing a copy of the original complaint.

The Board or appointed nominee and an appropriate Head of Service will form the Appeals Panel.

The appeal meeting will be held within 15 working days following receipt of the appeal. Again, the employee has a right to be accompanied at this meeting.

Following the appeal meeting, the manager will provide the employee with a written decision as soon as practically possible or within 10 working days.

This is the final stage of the grievance procedure. The decision of the appeals manager is final.

## **6 Right to be Accompanied**

Under This policy employees have a statutory right to be accompanied at their reasonable request, by a 'companion' throughout the process.

The term 'companion' is defined as a trade union official or work colleague. However, if an employee (who is a member of a trade union) wishes to bring both a local trade union official and work colleague, this will be permitted provided that the work colleague attends all grievance meetings as a silent observer.

A reasonable request for a companion would not include a work colleague or trade union official who for example, had a conflict of interests or whose presence may prejudice the meeting. It would also be unreasonable for an employee to be asked to be accompanied by a companion from a geographically remote location if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

Where the employee's chosen companion(s) is/are not able to attend the date agreed for the grievance meeting, an alternative date should be proposed by the employee and will usually be within 5 days from the date the grievance meeting date was confirmed. As far as reasonably possible, the location and timing of any meeting will be both convenient to employee, companion(s) and the grievance panel.

The main role of the companion is to provide support to the employee. In addition, the main companion (trade union representative if two companions attend) will be able to confer with the employee, sum up the employees' case, ask questions and participate fully in the meeting.

The companion does not have a statutory right to answer questions on the employee's behalf.

## **7 Timescales**

If it is not possible to hold the grievance meeting and respond within the set time frame, the employee will be given a response detailing the reason for the delay and when a response can be expected. This should usually be within an additional 5 working days.

There may be occasions when International Associates and the employee agree that the time limits should be extended.

## **8 Overlapping Grievance and Disciplinary cases**

Where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process, the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related, it may be appropriate to deal with both cases concurrently.

## **9 Records**

It is important to keep written records during each part of the grievance process. These records will include:

- The nature of the grievance raised.
- A copy of the written grievance.
- International Associates response.
- All communications.
- Actions taken.
- Reasons for action taken.
- Details of any appeal and the outcome reached.

All records will be kept confidential and retained.

Copies of any meeting records will be available to appropriate employees unless there are exceptional and agreed circumstances where it is necessary to withhold information, for example, to protect a witness.

## **10 Former Employees**

Each employee leaving International Associates has the opportunity to raise any issue through the exit process. If the employee feels unable to raise their grievance through this procedure, the expectation is that the employee will raise their grievance within three months of leaving International Associates.

Such former employees should write their complaint and send it to the Head of Human Resources within this time frame.

## **11 Review**

International Associates reserves the right to review and amend this policy periodically.



Martin Coles

Operations Director of International Associates Limited

Date: 24/10/2023